Governor's Organized Crime Probe

The growing specter of racketeer influence in Louisiana has prompted Gov. John McKeithen to call for an investigation of this alleged influence on government at the state level.

The new investigation represents the broadening of a probe begun earlier this summer into alleged racketeer influence in labor-management relations in the state and is a response to the charge that Louisiana is a center of organized crime.

The governor's investigation will be circumscribed by the fact that he has limited it solely to possible mob influence at the state level, although serious allegations have been leveled against some local officials.

The governor, for example, emphasized that he will not investigate the offices of Orleans Parish District Attorney Jim Garrison and Jefferson Parish District Attorney Frank Langridge, both of which have come under heavy fire.

Mr. Garrison time and again has denied the existence of organized crime in New Orleans and ridiculed assertions to the contrary by the Metropolitan Crime Commission of New Orleans.

On Tuesday, the governor said the allegations were erroneous in many aspects. After conferring with the crime commission he agreed on the investigation.

The commission, whose voice more often than not has gone unheeded in political circles, told the governor it is ready to furnish him with specific information as to names and places in organized crime.

The governor's investigation will be made by the newly created Intelligence Division of the state police, which has been working closely with the staff of the Labor-Management Commission of Inquiry, established at a recent special session of the Legislature to look into the allegation that racketeer influence has contributed to work stoppages in the Baton Rouge area.

While the governor's investigation is limited in scope, it is, nonetheless, belated recognition of the belief held by many well-informed citizens that organized crime is, indeed, widespread in the state.

The governor already has said he favors, as a long-range matter, the creation of a commission on law enforcement and the administration of justice, presumably along the lines of the one recently established by Mississippi.

It is our belief, however, that any investigation, in order to be fully effective, ultimately must encompass the impact of organized crime on local government.

For as the Presidential Commission on Crime concluded last February:

"Organized crime flourishes only where it has corrupted local officials."